

The Farms of Palestine

How They Raise Stock and Grain in the Land of Milk and Honey

By FRANK G. CARPENTER

Along the Shepherds and the Sheep-folds—Camels and Donkeys—How Plowing is Done—A Taxed-to-Death People—One-Eighth of the Crop for the Sultan—The Jewish Colony of Zammarrin Founded by Rothschild.

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ZAMMARIN, Mount Carmel, Palestine. I give you today some bits of Palestine out of doors. Within the past few weeks I have kept away from the cities and towns, and have watched the shepherds and farmers. I have seen the real Palestine, with the same sky, the same rocks and hills and the same carpet of wild flowers that were

father's asses when he was met by Samuel, the prophet, who gave him a kingdom. David was watching the sheep when Farmer Jesse, his father, sent him to the battle, where, with his sling, he killed the mighty Goliath and in time became Saul's successor. Lot was one of the richest farmers the Jordan valley has known, and as for Job, who lived in old Uz, he was the bonanza cattle man of his time, owning 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 she asses and a very large household. It was in one farm village, Bethlehem, that our savior was born, and in another farming settlement, Nazareth, that He grew to manhood. A great part of His life

new feeding grounds. The green of this country is mountainous. The stone rocks cover the soil, which is so thin that if you could pare it off for a depth of eight inches there would be nothing but stone. It is different in the plains and the valleys, but the hills are terraces of rock covered with boulders and sprinkled here and there with patches of earth. The conditions, however, are such that the least bit of soil will grow luxuriant grass, and the sheep seem to grow fat on the stones.

I remember some flocks I saw on my way to the Jordan. They were heavy-wooled animals, with tails of fat hanging down like aprons behind them. The most of them weighed 200 pounds, and the average was fatter and finer than the best sheep of America. Some were white-wooled and some brown, and others had brown heads and white bodies. I have tasted the mutton. It is excellent, and is the best meat to be had at the hotels.

Among the Shepherds.

The shepherds are about the same all over Palestine. They are kindly eyed men with fair faces, bronzed by the sun. They stay out all day on the hills with the sheep, driving them into the villages at night. Each shepherd has his staff and his scrip, a little bag of dried skin. He uses a sling as David did, and stones his sheep to keep them from straying. The strings of the slings are of goat hair, and the pad for the stone is of the same material, often made with a slit in the middle, so that when a stone is put in the sling fits close like a bag. Such things are now used in stone fights between the boys of the villages, who practice to see who can throw the farthest.

The wool of these sheep is especially fine. It brings a higher price than that of Damascus, and something like a million dollars' worth of it is exported a year. The shearing is done by hand, and much of the wool is sold unwashed. Some is washed after shearing, the work being done by women who receive less than a shilling a day.

Nearly every flock of sheep has its goats. They are usually black and can be picked out at a great distance. Some of the goats produce excellent milk, and the best as much as three quarts a day.

In the Sheepfolds.

There is a great deal in the Bible about the sheepfolds. These are common in Palestine. In the villages there are often corrals and sometimes caves in the hills. The village folds are closed at night, and the shepherds keep the keys. Those of the mountains are usually open and the sheep go in and out as they will.

One of the most important duties of the shepherd is to water the flock. He does this at streams or wells. At the wells the women draw the water for the sheep as they did in the days of the Scriptures. They use bags of goatskin untanned. The skins are



Shepherd With One of His Lambs.

and the legs and other openings tied up so that the skin is water proof. There is but one hole at the throat, and it is in this that the water is poured. The water for the household is carried in such bags, a network of ropes being wrapped around them so that it can be rested upon the back, the bag being supported by a rope around the forehead. A bag of the ordinary size, when filled, weighs at least fifty pounds. The women go along with their heads bent half double, carrying such bags to their village homes. They do this day after day all their lives long.

Camels and Donkeys.

The Palestine of today is a land of donkeys and camels. I suppose the latter are about the same as those owned by Job. They are reared in Beersheba, where the people largely live on their milk. The camel is the freight car of Palestine. I have seen many caravans of them in going over the country. On my way here we passed some camels which the Bedouin drivers were shearing. They were clipping the wool from the kneeling beasts, which cried and moaned and now and then uttered shrieks as the shears snipped off bits of their flesh. Not a few shed actual tears. The wool of these camels is woven into a coarse cloth which is used for weaving the coverings of the Bedouin tents.

As far as I can see these camels of the Holy Land have no easy job. They carry loads of three or four hundred pounds each, and on short trips their packs are left on day and night. They begin to work at three years, and often last until they are twenty-five years of age. The best of them bring from \$90 to \$100 apiece and the poorest from \$25 to \$50.

As to the donkeys, they are much cheaper. They form the draft animals of the poor, and are used by the farmers for carrying vegetables and wood into market. I see them loaded with olive roots on their way to Jerusalem, and now and then pass a donkey caravan, every animal carrying a bag of grain which has been

A Land of Milk and Honey.

Palestine is sometimes called "the land of milk and honey." This it was in the past, and this it may be again. A Swiss family, not far from Jerusalem, has recently gone into the bee business, and it is producing many thousands of pounds of honey a year. The bees are kept in hives made of terra cotta jars, which are moved to different pastures several times during a season. The average yield of honey per hive is about one hundred pounds, and the product is delicious.

As to the Palestine flowers, I cannot describe them. There are said to be more than 3,000 varieties. Crossing the upper plains of Sharon I rode through great fields of daisies as yellow as buttercups and as beautifully shaped as our daisies at home. Their were greenish-white flowers carpeting the roadside, and among them poppies, gladioluses and lilies. In the gardens here are geraniums as large as rose bushes and on the sides of the hills wild flowers of every description. There are yellow violets and pink and blue blossoms whose names I know not. There is also a red flower

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SHEARING A CAMEL.

here in the days of our Lord. I have talked with the farmers in the fields, have ridden side by side with the modern Balaam as he climbed the hills on his ass, and have even put my hand to the plows, such as were used in the times of the Scriptures, and with a goad have pricked on the bullocks and donkeys as they turned up the sod.

The Land of the Farmer.

The Palestine of the Bible was a land of the farmer. The children of Israel and their leaders were reared or worked on the farm. Abraham had numerous sheep and so had Isaac and Jacob. Saul was the son of old Farmer Kish, and he was hunting his

was spent in going about among the shepherds and farmers, and in His preaching the most of the examples and parables relate to things of the soil.

The Sheep of the Holy Land.

The most common sight out of doors in the Holy Land is the sheep. They are everywhere. You find them on the rich plains where the Philistines lived; they feed among the rocks on the slopes of the Judea mountains, and spot the wilderness all the way down to Jericho. They graze on every part of Samaria and Galilee, and almost everywhere on the plain of Esdraeon. They are always watched



HOW THEY PLOW IN PALESTINE.